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CANADA AND THE WAR

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Publications

CANADA'S FIGHTING MEN

*An Address on the Opening
of the Fourth Victory Loan Campaign*

by

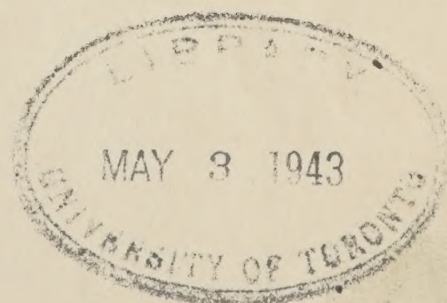
RIGHT HON. W. L. MACKENZIE KING, M.P.


Prime Minister of Canada

TORONTO, APRIL 19, 1943



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CANADA AND THE WAR

CANADA'S FIGHTING MEN

An Address before the Canadian Club of Toronto

by

RIGHT HON. W. L. MACKENZIE KING, M.P.

Prime Minister of Canada

Toronto, April 19, 1943

May I express to you, Mr. President, and to other officers and members of the Canadian Club of Toronto, my warm appreciation of the invitations so kindly extended to me from time to time. I am especially pleased that the occasion to address the Club's members has presented itself at the opening of Canada's Fourth Victory Loan campaign. I am not less grateful that the opportunity to make an appeal to my fellow-citizens throughout the Dominion should be afforded in the city which, for me, holds so much in the way of personal association.

An Urgent and Compelling Appeal

The Victory Loan has become a symbol of private determination and public duty—a symbol which reflects the strength and vigour of the Canadian people. The Victory Loan is a most essential part of Canada's war effort.

There has never been a time in Canada's history when an appeal for a Victory Loan was more urgent or more compelling. The appeal is urgent, because we are nearer than ever to the days of supreme effort. It is compelling, because it concerns so immediately the lives of Canada's fighting men.

It is of Canada's fighting men that I should like to speak particularly to-day. I wish to emphasize what we owe to them.

From Nationhood to World Power

As we stand at the threshold of this Fourth Victory Loan campaign, and view Canada's war effort from the vantage ground of the years of war, we are able to see our effort in its true proportions, to see it in its relation to the war effort of the other United Nations, and in its relation to common objectives. But that is not all. We can see how greatly, within the compass of the United Nations, Canada's status as a nation has broadened. We gain a larger vision of our country's opportunities and responsibilities. We see Canada now emerging from mere nationhood to the position of a world power.

In this pause of a moment, we obtain another, a still more significant vision. It is as if all Canada, having striven steadily onward and upward, under continually increasing burdens, for nearly four years, had been brought suddenly to realize that the summit has not yet been reached; and that if everything thus far accomplished is not to fail of ultimate achievement, a great new effort—a supreme effort—is now necessary.

Growth of Canada's War Effort

Our war effort as a whole has been carefully planned and organized. Our military forces, our war production and our essential services, have been kept in balance. We have sought to make our national effort, a maximum effort.

Our forces, three and a half years ago, were limited in numbers, in equipment, and in training. We have steadily expanded our forces. They have been provided with the best equipment. Training has been continuous, and is constantly being improved. We have developed many new kinds of war production. We have combined our effort harmoniously and efficiently with the efforts of our allies. Canadian forces and Canadian supplies have become a telling part of the total strength of the United Nations.

British Commonwealth Air Training Plan

There could be no finer illustration of the spirit of co-operation, characteristic of our whole war effort, than the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan. Nor has greater foresight been shown in any strategic aspect of war planning than has been revealed by this vast project. The Agreement, establishing the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan, was signed on December 17, 1939. On the same day, the first contingent of Canada's army landed in Britain.

The rapidity of the organization, and the scale of development of the Air Training Plan, have far exceeded the expectations of all who shared the responsibility of bringing it into being. A year ago, President Roosevelt said the training plan had made of Canada "the Aerodrome of Democracy". In his recent address to both Houses of our Parliament, Mr. Anthony Eden said: "If Canada had done nothing else in this war, her predominant share in the Commonwealth Air Training scheme would insure for her an enduring place in the roll of fame".

The vast development of the Air Training Plan is an assurance that Canada will continue to contribute trained fighting airmen to sustain the offensives against Germany, Italy, and Japan, until the fate of all three is sealed.

The Royal Canadian Air Force

The Royal Canadian Air Force, in addition to its administration of the training plan, has, from the outset, patrolled and protected the approaches to our coasts. Long-range aircraft, manned by Canadians, are employed in growing numbers in protecting escorted ships across the sea lanes of the Atlantic.

Since 1940, our Air Force has shared increasingly in action against the enemy wherever he may be found. Canadian airmen have been operating, on this continent, from Newfoundland to Alaska and the Aleutians; in the Far East, in India and Ceylon; in the Middle East, in Palestine, Egypt and Libya. From Malta and the African coasts, they have been operating over Italy and the waters of the Mediterranean. Growing numbers of Canadian squadrons, based in Britain, have ranged far and wide over Germany and enemy-occupied Europe. I could give no more graphic picture of the extent to which Canada's war effort has become part of a world-wide conflict. Canada, to-day, is the fourth greatest military air power among the United Nations.

The Royal Canadian Navy

The Canadian Navy, like the Canadian Air Force, has developed phenomenally. Its spirit, its organization, and its training, like those of the Air Force, have all stressed the need of smooth and effective co-operation with allied forces. Through more than three long and bitter years, whether on destroyers, corvettes, minesweepers, patrol vessels, sub-chasers, or other craft, men of the Royal Canadian Navy, in ever-growing numbers, have helped to hold the sea lanes open.

In recent months, our Navy has been sharing nearly half the burden of convoy duty on the North Atlantic sea routes. This is very arduous and very dangerous work. It is being carried on through every kind of weather and with unceasing vigil. Units of Canada's Navy have also operated in other theatres of war. On the Pacific Ocean, and in the waters of the Mediterranean, our ships and men have been in action against the foe.

When our present programme of Naval expansion is completed a year hence, the personnel of Canada's Navy will approximately equal in numbers the personnel of the British Navy shortly before the outbreak of war.

The Merchant Marine

Closely associated with our Navy is Canada's merchant marine. In this service also there has been immense expansion. Our merchant seamen operate the ships in the convoys. Theirs are the ships that transport across the seas the food, the guns, the tanks, the planes, and other munitions of war produced in Canada. Their rugged endurance of the stormy life of the sea and all its wartime dangers is equalled only by their constant resolution to bring these precious cargoes to their destination. Our merchant seamen are making a noble contribution to this world-wide fight for freedom.

The Canadian Army

The Canadian Army, like the Canadian Air Force and the Canadian Navy, has been built up and developed in close co-operation with the British forces, and more recently with those of other of our Allies.

After Dunkirk, the First Canadian Division was one of very few divisions in Britain equipped to fight. It was the presence there of our First Division, and the arrival of our Second Division, which, later in the year, made it possible for the British Government to send

reinforcements to Egypt. These reinforcements, with other troops from Britain, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and India, saved the Middle East. New units, formations and reserves have gone forward from Canada to Britain as quickly and as continuously as ships could be found to carry them. The First Canadian Army Corps, formed at Christmas 1940, has now grown into an army of two corps with an appropriate proportion of armoured formations. General McNaughton has said that the Army he commands is, for its size, "the most highly mechanized force in the world".

Training and Strategy

In all the varied aspects of modern war, the officers and men of Canada's Army have undergone unending training. Our Army has brought its training—individually by units, and collectively as a striking force—to a perfection perhaps never exceeded. That training has been hard, a training resembling as closely as possible the conditions of actual warfare. All the while, at the heart of the world's greatest citadel of freedom, Canada's Army has stood guard. It has been constantly in readiness to repel the invader. It has been a means of holding in Western Europe, and of withholding from Russia and Africa, German forces many times its size.

There have been several periods of intense activity, when battle against the enemy seemed imminent. In the spring of 1940, a part of the First Division was all ready to set out for Norway. Our troops were prepared to go to France before Dunkirk. Some detachments actually landed in France after Dunkirk. In 1941, there was the expedition to Spitzbergen, in the Arctic. In 1942, there was Dieppe.

If our forces overseas have remained so largely, and for so long, within the British Isles, if Canadian formations have not been broken up for service in other theatres, this has been due entirely to the considered judgment and advice of those concerned with the strategical direction of the war. It has not been because of any restriction imposed by the government of Canada. War strategy must be planned as a whole. With respect to the operations of Canadian troops, our government, since the outbreak of war, has taken but one position. It is that Canadian forces, in whole or in part, should be used where and when they can make the best contribution to the winning of the war.

Service at Home and Abroad

From a very small beginning, the strength of the Canadian Active Army has now grown to more than 435,000 men, of which

number over 190,000 are in Britain. A few thousands more are serving outside Canada in this hemisphere. Of the more than 240,000 soldiers in Canada, over 180,000 have volunteered for service anywhere in the world.

Units of our army are manning coastal and anti-aircraft defences in Canada and providing mobile reserves in the coastal regions. Many thousands more are in training. Throughout the war, units of the Canadian Army have served in many parts of the Western Hemisphere. From Canada's east coast, they reached out to Newfoundland, to Labrador, and to Iceland. Canadian forces have served in Bermuda, in Jamaica, and in the Caribbean area. Still others are co-operating with United States forces in Alaska.

For over a year, Canadian tunnellers were stationed at Gibraltar. To gain first-hand battle experience, officers and non-commissioned officers of the Canadian Army in Britain have been attached to and are fighting as part of the British First Army in North Africa.

Units of Canada's Army have also served in the Far East. In recounting the actions which have made of Canada's defence against aggression a memorable part of the world-wide fight for freedom, sufficient recognition has never been given to the Canadian expedition which in the autumn of 1941, sailed for Hong Kong. Nor has adequate honour been done its heroic part in the defence of that distant island fortress.

When, in the great silence which will follow the defeat of Germany and Japan, the thoughts of the world revert to the days when these mighty powers were challenged, no episodes of chivalry or daring will shine forth more brightly than those which tell of the Canadians at Hong Kong and Dieppe.

Canada a Vast Arsenal

War-making is not merely a task for the armed forces. Obviously, for Canada, the military effort, however great, can only be a part of a total effort. To effect a total effort our national economy has been transformed. Canada has become a vast arsenal. In three years, our industrial output has been doubled. In volume of war production, our country is fourth among the United Nations.

From the beginning of the war, we planned to produce far more supplies than were required for Canada's forces. In foodstuffs, in munitions, in weapons, in aircraft, and in ships, we have sought to produce to the limit of our capacity.

Under our policy of mutual aid, we are doing everything we can to make sure that our munitions and supplies are available in the theatres of war where they are most needed. In sending supplies to other United Nations, we are in reality helping to defend our own country. We are supplying munitions of war to Russia and China, to Australia and New Zealand, as well as to Britain and the United States. We are supplying these munitions to fight for these countries, to fight for Canada, to fight for freedom, to shorten the war, and to save human lives.

Canada's Armed Forces as a Whole

In round numbers, the total strength of our armed forces is over 700,000. Naval personnel numbers, in men, over 55,000; air force personnel about 200,000; and army personnel over 435,000. In addition, there are 22,000 women serving in the uniforms of the three armed services. These numbers do not include many tens of thousands of men giving part time service in the Reserve Army.

Our war strategy is based on the principle that wherever the enemy can be successfully engaged, Canada's interests are being advanced, and world freedom preserved.

We have not neglected our particular responsibility for the local defence of our homeland and of nearby areas. But we have clearly recognized that, so long as the enemy is undefeated anywhere, Canada will not be secure.

Canadian airmen have fought over almost every battle area around the globe. Canadian sailors have served on every ocean. Canadian soldiers have seen action on all three continents of the Old World. By their deeds, our fighting men have shown that the Canadian people understand there are no real frontiers in this world war, except the frontier between freedom and servitude.

Canada's Supreme Hour

The supreme hour for Canada will come when, along with the combined forces of the Allied powers, all our forces in the air, at sea, and on land, are attacking as one, in a mighty effort to batter down the ramparts of Prussian power, and to slay the dragon of Nazi brutality in its native lair. It is to hasten the day of this final attack, and to give to our fighting men all the support that we can possibly give, that the government appeals to-day to men and women in all

parts of Canada to make to the Fourth Victory Loan the largest response that Canada has made to any appeal, at any time.

The Supreme Task of the War

I wish I were in a position to tell you when the days of supreme effort will come. I wish much more it were possible to foretell the day of victory. These, no one in this world can foresee. I may be able, however, to help you form your own estimate.

Existing situations may continue favourable. They may change rapidly. It is well, therefore, that we should be prepared for the invasion of Europe at any time. But conditions may change in unexpected ways. It is well, therefore, that we should also be prepared to wait. Through some unpredictable event, all our present calculations may be set at naught. We may be found to have been too hopeful. Moreover, we must never lose sight of the fact that the Allied powers are at war with Japan, as well as with Germany and Italy. Major battles may be fought at any moment in any quarter of the globe.

Those who count upon recent Allied successes as an assurance of an early defeat of the Axis powers should recall the ebb and flow of battle over the past three years. Within that time what most people imagined would be a European war has become a conflict of hemispheres. Of the present situation, the most one can say is that, in the Orient and the Occident alike, the sweep appears to be narrowing. Against this contraction in the areas of conflict, we must offset the intensity of the fighting.

Of the defeat of Italy in this war there can be no doubt whatever. Her colonial empire has already been torn to shreds. Her troops, used by the Germans so largely to meet the onslaught of opposing forces, and to cover their own retreats, have been slain or captured by the hundreds of thousands; her shores daily face the prospect of invasion. The defeat of Japan is remote, but nonetheless a certainty once Germany is defeated. To destroy the military might of the German war machine remains for the Allied powers the supreme task of the war. That task can be finally accomplished only on German soil.

The Invasion of Europe

It is not for me, nor indeed for anyone else, to hint at Allied strategy, much less to disclose to the enemy its essential aspects.

There are, however, some secrets, even military secrets, which are open secrets. The invasion of the continent of Europe by the combined Allied forces is one. The unconditional surrender of German forces on German soil is another. There is to be no other surrender. When the hour of supreme effort comes, each of the contending forces will know it is the end, and that one of them must yield or die. That hour will also decide whether civilization itself is to live or die. All that has gone before, all that is now taking place, is leading up to that hour.

As I think of the ordeal through which our country will be called upon to pass in the days of supreme effort, I wish I were able to express to you the thoughts that will be required to sustain the hearts of us all. I can but say, quoting from words of inspiration with which you are already familiar:

“Think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you.”

Rather, let us rejoice that it has been given to us to be partakers of the spirit of those—the flower of our land—who, to save mankind, proudly have gathered

“rank on rank to war

“As who had heard God’s message from afar.”

Difficulties of Invasion

In contemplating the conquest of Germany, we must keep in mind the way in which Nazi power has reached out in Europe. Little more than three years ago, the might of the Prussian war machine was held within the confines of a single country. It now controls a continent. The German stronghold has expanded into a European fortress. For the materials of war, and for food, Germany is able to draw upon a storehouse which comprises many countries. Nazi brutality continues to terrorize and to enslave conquered millions, to force their labour, and to exploit their resources.

Invasion from the sea is many times more difficult than invasion of adjacent lands. Before the Allied powers attempt invasion across the Mediterranean, the English channel, or the North Sea, or from the waters of the Atlantic, we will have to be very certain of being able to land forces and equipment, and to hold the bridgehead. It

would be no help to ourselves, to Russia or China, or to any other of the Allied powers to have landing forces annihilated. Once forces have landed, they will be dependent on supplies and reinforcements which can be brought to them only across or over the sea.

We must also expect that, once bridgeheads are established, the tide of battle will ebb and flow. Because in Europe the enemy has strengthened the outer ramparts of his stronghold, it will be very difficult to reach German soil. There may be long periods of fighting in the occupied countries. This makes clear why, up to the present, all military authorities have insisted that, before a full-scale offensive is launched, there must be no lack of ships for the transport of troops and supplies; no lack of landing craft; no lack of aircraft to cover the advance of land operations; no menace at sea capable of cutting off the needed reinforcements and supplies.

The Submarine Menace

I need not remind you that at all times the North Atlantic sea lanes are a vital artery of supplies to the United Nations, especially to Britain and to Russia. If the war is to be won, the sea lanes must be kept open. If they were to be cut, the reserves of supplies in the British Isles would soon wither away. The whole tremendous armoury which has been concentrated in the citadel of Britain might very rapidly deteriorate, and its striking power be dissipated.

The Battle of the Atlantic, though hidden largely from view, is fiercer than ever. The submarine has become the deadliest weapon at Hitler's command. His U-boats have been concentrating in mid-Atlantic, along the shipping routes from Canada and the United States to Britain and the Mediterranean. Their numbers are larger than ever. Like wolves, they hunt in packs. Their aim is to sever the ocean lines of communication between the New World and the Old. The successful control of this menace is a necessary prelude to any successful invasion of the continent of Europe. Now, as never before, the bridge of ships across the North Atlantic must be maintained.

Lessons from the North African Campaign

In viewing the larger picture of the invasion of Europe, we may be helped to a truer perspective by what we already have seen in the invasion of North Africa.

I am sure it will come as a surprise to you to recall that it is almost half a year since American and British forces landed at Casablanca and Algiers. At that time, many thought the end of the African campaign would be a matter of a few weeks. Instead, it has taken months. The difficulties of securing and maintaining lines of communication, of bringing up the necessary supplies and reinforcements, proved greater than were anticipated. Imagine, however, what the consequences would have been had the Allied forces met formidable or prolonged opposition. Imagine the situation if, at any stage, they had been cut off from needed reinforcements and supplies.

To the enemy, the landing in North Africa of American and British forces was a complete surprise. There can be no element of surprise in the attempted invasion of Europe, except for the places and moments of attack. From the beginning of the war, the enemy has been taking every conceivable precaution to meet invasion from any quarter. German forces can be moved from almost any part of Europe to almost any other part with lightning rapidity. No worse fate could befall an invading force than to find itself opposed by German divisions so vastly superior in numbers that it could not hold its ground. For it and for the enemy this would be the North African situation in reverse.

Need for the Most Complete Preparation

You will agree, I am sure, that this greatest of all tasks must be approached with the utmost foresight, that it will require the most complete preparation. It is the duty of all concerned to see that sound judgment is not impaired by impatience, that nothing that can possibly be foreseen is left to chance. Invasion when it comes must be fortified with as full knowledge, as it is possible to obtain in advance, of every factor that will count for life or death in the balances that to-day are deciding the fate of the world.

We are anxious to see the end of the war. But we are most of all concerned that it shall end in victory. The mighty venture in which our own men are destined to play a decisive role should be made as certain of success as anything in war can be made. That it may be made certain of success, that it may be crowned with victory, is shown by the North African campaign. The battle for Tunisia is in all our minds. No one will say that General Montgomery is lacking in swift decision, or that he ever hesitated to engage in perilous action when the possible gain was worth the risk. But his advance, while daring, has also been cautious. He has

never allowed himself to be tempted or hurried into premature action. He has refused to move until every last preparation has been complete. Each time Montgomery has given the word to advance, it has been a signal of victory.

The Supreme Effort

I have attempted to give a more or less impressionist survey of Canada's war effort, as we are able to view its proportions to-day, from the vantage ground of the years of war. I have attempted also to give some impression of the magnitude of the task that still confronts the United Nations. I have referred to an impression still more vivid. It is a consciousness that we have not yet reached the summit of our endeavours. It is a realization that, if everything thus far accomplished is not to prove to have been in vain, a great new effort—a supreme effort—is now necessary.

Canada's Fighting Men

Of one thing we may be assured. In every effort, our fighting men will not fail us. Let us make very sure we do not fail them. Let them see how completely their country is behind them. For us at home, in Canada, it is not enough to be proud of their achievements. We must not permit the pride which all Canada feels in their gallant exploits to blind us to what their efforts cost in human life, in suffering and privation, and in anguish of heart and mind. They are prepared to give their all. Let them see that we are prepared to do the same.

Let us not forget the continued patience and endurance of our fighting men. Let us not forget that some of them have been separated from homes and loved ones for nearly four years. Let us remember that many already have made the supreme sacrifice; that many have been severely wounded, or crippled for life; that many are imprisoned in enemy camps. Let us remember that, day by day, and night by night, our fighting men are risking their lives, that not one of them knows what the morrow may bring.

Let us realize that the success of their supreme effort is bound up in what we do for them. Everything we do now, this very month, will save many lives and will count for victory at an earlier day.

A War for Men's Minds and Souls

Our own interest as a nation, and every consideration of justice towards the wronged and the oppressed are bound up in this titanic struggle.

We cannot too often remind ourselves that the present war is different from any war in the past. It is different in scale. It is the first war which, in an accurate geographical sense, is really a world war. Moreover, it is a war which is being fought at one and the same time, in the air, on land and at sea. It is different from other wars in the nature and use of the forces employed. It is a war, as Mr. Churchill has said, of machines, of science, and of psychology.

But this war is different from other wars in yet other and more important respects. It is different in its purpose, and in its possibilities. It is a war not only in the material realm. It is a war for the control of men's minds and of men's souls. It is a war that will affect not only our own generation. It will leave its imprint on every subsequent age of humanity. It is a war that will shape the moral destiny of the world.

